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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ECUADOR ELECTION UPDATE: CORREA NAMES SURPRISE  
RUNNING-MATE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Far-left presidential candidate Rafael Correa (PAIS) on August 5 announced Lenin Voltaire MORENO Garces as his running mate at a mass rally in rural coastal Guayas province. Moreno, a relative political unknown, is unlikely to attract many votes to Correa, who said his choice of Moreno, a paraplegic, showed that "we are on the side of the weak." With four tickets now complete, electoral speculation now centers on whether Freddy Ehlers, a prominent journalist, will enter the race, dividing the center-left, or possibly defer and even endorse Roldos. On August 8, the Alvaro Noboa's PRIAN formally withdrew from its earlier electoral alliance with Lucio Gutierrez' PSP. In other election news, the PSC registered party patriarch Leon Febres Cordero at the top of the candidate list for Congress from Guayas province. The new Minister of Government told the Charge on August 7 that the government is considering adding a "sixth ballot"--essentially a referendum--to tap public opinion during the second round of presidential voting on November 26. Women's groups are challenging implementation of the quota law which mandates that every party include 45% women candidates. End Summary.

Correa Selects Unknown Running-mate  
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¶2. (SBU) Moreno, a motivational speaker and promoter of "laugh therapy" for the disabled, hails from the Amazon region and is himself wheelchair-bound. Moreno supports modernization of the public sector and increased rights for the disabled, researches emotional intelligence and is known for his sense of humor. He describes himself as someone who "decided to return to life" after he was paralyzed by a gunshot in 1998. Another leader of the handicapped movement told us he had also been offered the VP slot by Correa, who was apparently intent on selecting someone from this sector.

¶3. (U) Correa announced Moreno as his running mate in rural Palestina, Guayas province, on August 5. Correa used the announcement speech to outline five strategies for rural development to the audience composed mainly of poor farmers. Moreno pledged to support Correa's agenda and focus on modernizing the public sector, promoting tourism, and supporting the disabled and street children. He expressed confidence in his own and Correa's ability to get the job done, saying "I don't think that the country is unmanageable, they just have not known how to handle it." The two registered their candidacies with electoral authorities on August 7, presenting 417,000 signatures in favor (note: 98,000 are required for movements to register; political party candidates are not required to present signatures, but

are required to have won more than 5% of the national vote in the previous election).

¶4. (SBU) Bio Information: Moreno was born on March 19, 1953, in Nuevo Rocafuerte, in the Amazonian province of Orellana. He is a licensed Public Administrator and Academic Director of the "Event Foundation" where he promotes emotional intelligence and is a motivational speaker known for his use of humor. Moreno graduated from Central University where he studied Social Science. From 2001-2004 he served as National Disabilities Director. He has also served as the Executive Director for the National Federation of the Chamber of Tourism in Pichincha province. Moreno has published ten books on philosophy and humor, including a book of jokes. He reportedly enjoys painting, swimming, singing, and playing guitar with his wife and three daughters in Quito. (Comment: Moreno has active and positive ties with the Quito "forajido" movement that toppled Gutierrez; a highly engaging speaker, one former Gutierrez minister told us that he could significantly help the ticket in Quito.)

#### Proano Maya Registers Running-Mate

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¶5. (SBU) Former Congressional leader Marco Proano Maya, the Quixotic presidential candidate of the newly created Movement for Democratic Vindication, registered his candidacy with electoral authorities on August 4. Proano had left Abadala Bucaram's Roldosista Party in 2004, after being passed over for the President of Congress position. His base of support includes mainly pensioners, whose rights he champions. He was joined on his ticket by Galo Santillan, a former Guayaquil chamber of commerce official. Santillan brings a youthful and mainstream appeal to the ticket, but is not well

enough known to alter this candidate's lackluster results so far. Proano presented 125,000 signatures to register his candidacy but has attracted only marginal support (1-2%) in national polling.

#### Freddy Ehlers on the Fence

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¶6. (U) A new element of uncertainty was injected late in the pre-campaign period when popular journalist Freddy Ehlers spurned offers of the vice presidential slot on two tickets (Viteri and Correa). Instead, Ehlers said he was considering running for president himself for his New Nation Movement ("Nuevo Pais"). He also had reportedly been working behind the scenes to forge a national consensus ticket of powerhouse mayors Jaime Nebot and Paco Moncayo, but that fell through. Ehlers ran unsuccessfully for president in 1996 and 1998, winning third (with 20%) and fourth-place (14%) finishes, respectively. In 2002 he was elected to the Andean Parliament with more than 20% of the national vote. His announcement immediately caused a furor in the Roldos/ID camp, which fears an Ehlers candidacy would divide the center-left vote. ID leaders postponed the announcement of Congressional candidate lists, offering to defer to Ehlers on some nominations in exchange for him staying out of the presidential race.

¶7. (U) Ehlers' camp pushed for inclusion of ex-Minister of Economy Diego Borja in the ID candidate list for Pichincha province, where controversy already raged over the omission of senior ID legislator Andres Paez. After Ehlers declared he would urge voters not to vote for Congress, pledging a Constituent Assembly to change constitutional rules on selecting a new Congress and Supreme Court, the ID declined to incorporate Borja in its lists. Ehlers reportedly has already dropped the idea and Nuevo Pais is in the process of drawing up congressional candidate lists, placing Borja at the top of the list for Pichincha and former Cuenca mayor and Ehlers campaign manager Fernando Cordero for Azuay province. The ID list remains secret, but Roldos' running-mate Ramiro Gonzalez told the press that Paez would be included, preventing internal schism.

## Government Considering Non-binding Plebiscite

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18. (SBU) In a courtesy call on August 7 the new Government Minister, Antonio Andretta, told the Charge he would mobilize public forces to ensure peaceful elections. After lamenting early public apathy Andretta said the Palacio government would likely suspend its push for political or electoral reforms before the election. (Note: Traditionally, the Government Minister has led these efforts.) One exception, he said, might be the inclusion of a question or set of up to three questions (content unspecified) to be posed to voters in a "sixth ballot," in addition to the ballots for Pres/VP, Congress, Andean Parliament, Provincial Council, and Municipal Council seats. If this initiative, proposed by Education Minister Raul Vallejo and civil society groups, comes to pass, Andretta said, it would only take place in the second round of presidential voting, on November 26. He did not clarify which issues might be posed to voters, but they would deal with education policy rather than broader political reform issues. Any such plebiscite would not bind the next government, but depending on results, could encourage action on reforms by the new Congress.

## PRIAN/PSP Alliance Off

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19. (SBU) Press reported on August 8 that PRIAN congressional leader Sylka Sanchez announced that the PRIAN will run its own candidates, rather than entering into any alliance with ex-president Lucio Gutierrez' Patriotic Society Party. If confirmed, the decision would put to rest speculation that Noboa might invite former Trade Minister Ivonne Baki or Gutierrez sidekick Fausto Cobo to join him on the ticket. Baki told the Charge on August 9 that Noboa did not feel that he knew her well enough to make the offer, and that a meeting between Noboa and Gutierrez on broader alliance issues had gone badly. Baki thought there was still a remote chance for salvaging the alliance, but that egos involved were making it unlikely.

110. (SBU) Lucio Gutierrez moved ahead in the post-breakup scenario by announcing early on August 9 that the PSP would run a ticket led by his brother Gilmar Gutierrez and his government's former agriculture minister Leonardo Escobar. While the PRIAN and PSP slates will remain a factor, absent an alliance it is much less likely either will make it into the second round. All candidacies for President, VP, Congress and council seats must be registered by August 15.

## PSC Sticks with the Boss

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111. (U) The Social Christian Party surprised no one by registering party patriarch and former president Leon Febres Cordero at the top of the PSC's candidate lists for Guayas province, assuring his re-election. Febres Cordero has not been seen in Congress for years, due to health problems with the altitude of Quito.

## Women Pushing for Access

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112. (U) Women's groups have challenged the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's (TSE) interpretation of the law requiring 45% women candidates in the Constitutional Court. The TSE had declined to mandate that male and female candidates alternate one for one at the top of the party lists of candidates, permitting some parties to alternate using other formulas (e.g. men for the principal list, women as alternates) which reduce prospects for women to gain office. The ruling from the court is expected before August 15.

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